

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time the Church of God on earth consisted in one parish only; Christ was the Parish Priest. But the tiny mustard seed was quick in growing; "Other Christs" uttered in many places the saving Word, "missions" became parishes, parishes became the seat of the diocese, and the Church assumed the stature of an empire greater than that of Greece or Rome. This growth, cell-like in its progress, goes on and on. This week we see an outstanding instance of it in the Archdiocese of Boston. Growth, the surest sign of wholesome life, is beautiful to observe; the Catholics, and we are sure their non-Catholic neighbors as well, are delighted as a score of new parishes comes into being.

In the past year a number of new institutions have been established, all designed to meet outstanding needs and provide for expansion. But these are all intended to solve specific, and to some extent, unusual problems. The multiplication of parish units, however, is the normal and necessary enterprise of the church on earth. Diocesan institutions may come and go along with situations that demanded them, but the need for vigorous parish life and for close relationships between priest and people is a permanent one rooted in the very nature of the Church.

The desirability of these new parish centers has often been discussed and quite generally admitted. Various considerations including the disorder of wartime, have delayed the execution

of the project. The Archbishop, after carefully examining the situation for a long period has now happily decided that this is the acceptable time.

It will be noted that nearly all the new parishes are away from the great metropolitan centers. Observing the great throngs pouring out of our city churches on Sunday, and the beautiful schools and rectories that rise up everywhere in large parishes, one might suppose that the Church is completely established in this section. A visit to the countryside, however reveals that there are many beautiful communities without a parish church or resident clergy.

The people in these districts are excellent Catholics and as such are entitled to as many of the advantages of the Church as possible. Hitherto too far away to know their clergy well, they may have missed the blessing of personal acquaintance with the guardians of their spiritual welfare.

By the erection of these new parishes, and the inevitable growth that will follow, many of our beautiful communities will be benefited greatly. The pastors appointed are devoted men, youthful enough to give vigorous leadership to their people; the returning veterans will be attracted to them and, with the marriages to be expected, will establish new Catholic families around the nucleus of their parish church. The older people who for so many years have faithfully preserved under the inconvenience of having, in many cases, to go to another

town to see their pastor will welcome the new arrangement. The Church began under rural auspices. Not once but many times, Our Divine Lord explained its nature and mission in the simple and accurate language of the countryside. In the vineyard, the ripening fields, the sheepfold, we are taught to see the image of the Kingdom; hardly does he speak of the cities except to weep over them. The vision of a rural pastor and his devoted flock is one of the classic pictures of Catholic Action at its best.

The establishment of these parishes will demand labor, energy, zeal and sacrifice. Priests and people must work side by side with the greatest mutual confidence and affection. This united effort, under God, brings in turn increased blessing and presents to those outside the fold a compelling example of harmony and Christian love.

Our diocese is well known throughout the world in its interest in the Missions of the field afar. At the same time we must always be aware of our immediate neighbors to whom, by a kind of divine call, we have the obligation to extend the Faith by words and, even more so, by the influence of holy lives.

The new opportunities for all, implied in the creation of these new ecclesiastical centers among us, will certainly not go unheeded. We congratulate the congregations which have been raised to the dignity of parishes and beg God's blessing upon them and upon the new shepherds of their souls.